

Environmental officials praise septic projects as innovative

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — Federal and state officials stood beside the Bluefish River yesterday to praise Duxbury for constructing two innovative septic waste disposal systems, which they say should serve as models for other Massachusetts communities.

John DeVillars, New England regional administrator for the federal Environmental Protection Agency, said Duxbury's two shared septic systems provide "creative examples of federal-state-local cooperation in solving environmental problems."

Trudy Coxe, state secretary of environmental affairs, said, "We have great hopes that these projects will be copied by many other towns in Massachusetts."

Coxe then presented Town Manager Rocco Longo with a mock check for \$679,541, which represented the amount of a low-interest state loan that will allow the town to save an estimated \$170,000 in interest payments on the debt incurred to construct the two projects.

Duxbury

The two projects, at the Bluefish River and the Snug Harbor business district, were designed to solve Duxbury Bay pollution problems by linking waterfront property owners with failing septic systems to a shared upland leaching field.

The Bluefish project connects three houses on either side of Washington Street at the river to a common sewer line that will take the effluent to a leaching field at the nearby Ellison Center for the Arts.

The Snug Harbor project connects 11 properties to a sewer line leading to a leaching field at the Duxbury Yacht Club golf course.

The two projects, which were constructed under a single contract, are nearly complete and about ready to begin operating.

Ruth Rowley, chairman of the board of

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State Secretary of Environmental Affairs Trudy Coxe praises Duxbury for its innovative septic projects as regional EPA chief John DeVillars and Ruth Rowley look on.

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health, said four factors helped make the ideas a reality:

- The state's 1995 Title 5 septic waste regulations, which provided for shared systems.
- Duxbury board of health policies that on the one hand required off-site disposal of septic waste from waterfront properties and on the other committed the town to paying construction costs through betterment fees and operation costs through user fees.
- A federal EPA grant of \$32,000 to the Plymouth-Kingston-Duxbury Baywide Committee to study ways of

solving septic waste disposal problems at the Bluefish River.

• Duxbury itself, "a community committed to sound environmental action," Rowley said, citing separate town meeting votes that authorized construction of the two projects.

Wil Sheehan, a Snug Harbor property owner, said the projects are "an outstanding example of government working with the private sector."

"This has been a win-win situation for all involved," Sheehan said. Rowley promised the board of health will soon act on other shared system possibilities.

"We will be going down Bay Road and try to take care of Kingston Bay," she said.